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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 16, 1964

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSESTATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT
ON CHINESE COMMUNIST DETON-
ATION OF NUCLEAR DEVICES

The Chinese Communists have announced that they conducted their first nuclear test today. By our own detection system we have confirmed that a low yield test actually took place in Western China at about 3 a.m. EDT.

As Secretary Rusk noted on September 29, we have known for some time that the Chinese Communists had a nuclear development program which was approaching the point of a first detonation of a test device.

This explosion comes as no surprise to the United States Government. It has been fully taken into account in planning our own defense program and nuclear capability. Its military significance should not be overestimated. Many years and great efforts separate testing of a first nuclear device from having a stockpile of reliable weapons with effective delivery systems.

Still more basic is the fact that if and when the Chinese Communists develop nuclear weapons systems, free world nuclear strength will continue to be enormously greater.

The United States reaffirms its defense commitments in Asia. Even if Communist China should eventually develop an effective nuclear capability, that capability would have no effect upon the readiness of the United States to respond to requests from Asian nations for help in dealing with Communist Chinese aggression. The United States will also not be diverted from its efforts to help the nations of Asia to defend themselves and to advance the welfare of their people.

The Chinese Communist nuclear weapons program is a tragedy for the Chinese people who have suffered so much under the Communist regime. Scarce economic resources which could have been used to improve the well-being of the Chinese people have been used to produce a crude nuclear device which can only increase the sense of insecurity of the Chinese people. Other Asian nations have wisely chosen instead to work for the well-being of their people through economic development and peaceful use of the atom. In this way they have made a great contribution to the peace and security of the world.

The Chinese Communist nuclear detonation is a reflection of policies which do not serve the cause of peace. But there is no reason to fear that it will lead to immediate dangers of war. The nations of the Free World will recognize its limited significance and will persevere in their determination to preserve their independence.

We join all humanity in regretting the contamination of the atmosphere caused by the Chinese Communist test. We will continue in our own efforts to keep the atmosphere clean. We will pursue with dedication and determination our purpose of achieving concrete practical steps on the road that leads away from nuclear armaments and war and toward a world of cooperation, development and peace.

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